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TURNOVO

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Nikolay Michev

Turnovo, the old capital city, is located in the northernmost folds of the foot hills of the Balkan mountains, on both sides of the meandering Yantra River.

With its historical monuments and remarkable surroundings, and above all with its charming amphitheatrical location, the city has for a long time been the center of attention of numerous Bulgarian and foreign travelers, scientists, and lovers of natural beauties.

The Turnovo site is wonderfully beautiful. With a first view of the city, the newcomer is astounded by the grandiose picture which spreads before him. The houses of the city are perched one over the other along the steep slopes of the hills which incline toward the river. Behind the houses, like artificial decorations, steep rocks raise their heads toward the sky, and down below, one hears the quiet murmuring of the Yantra River. Its silvery waters reflect, rippled by the waves, the environs of the city. The view becomes even more glorious when the city is seen after sunset from the Zhelazna (Stambolov) Bridge. It is not without reason that a Bulgarian author insistently recommends: "Step, foreigner, on the Stambolov Bridge above the Yantra, with your eyes turned toward the city. This view will last you a lifetime. The houses, clustered one above the other, wink in the dust with their electric eyes, and look at their reflection in the waters of the river which twists between perpendicular rocky banks." The view is no less beautiful when the visitor climbs to the old center of the city -- the Bashdarlika -- and looks east.

Before him is the foreground in Tranevets, behind is Tsarevets, and on the horizon itself above the perpendicular rocks, Arbanasi village. The view from this point is particularly beautiful when fog rolls in over the Yantra River, and above the fog, like individual islands, lit by the first rays of the sun, the Tsarevets and Trapezitsa Hills appear.

The city itself is located in the heart of the Turnovo Mountains, where their mass has been deeply cut into by the Yantra River. For many thousands of years the river dug itself in, eating up the limestone layers of the mountain, until it formed the present charming and beautiful sculptural panorama in the midst of which the city is located. The river itself enters the Turnovo Mountains through the beautiful Usteto Pass. After running for nearly 2 hours and twisting like a gigantic snake between the Sveta Gora, Tsarevets, Momina Krepost, and Trapezitsa Hills, it opens out in the even more beautiful, greenery 6-km Derveneto Pass. On all sides, Turnovo is surrounded by limestone hills and small plateaus, which in most cases at the city in perpendicular rocky cliffs.

The western hill slopes down from Orlov Vrukh Peak. The central and most beautiful part of Turnovo is located in its southern exposure. To the north, the hill descends steeply toward the Yantra River, in some places almost perpendicular. To the south it slopes off and forms a small plateau known as Marne Pole. There part of the city located is the newest. To the east, the hill ends in a long and narrow, rocky strip, which, like a bridge, links the city with Tsarevets Hill. Tsarevets is a hill of average height. On all sides it is bounded by steep, in places perpendicular, rocky slopes. During the Middle Ages, Tsarevets was surrounded by thick bastion walls with towers, loopholes and gates, and was a fortress difficult to take.

On the southeast a second hill descends toward the Yantra River. The hill touches the river's waters on the north, west, and southwest. The northern part of the hill is known by the name Sveta Gora. Before the liberation, according to the descriptions of travellers, Sveta Gora was covered by a thick forest, "where the larks sang in heavy shade," while from the city came the melodious songs and laughter of the Turkish maidens on their way to enjoy the freshness of the forest. Now, the Turkish sector is located on the northeastern slope of Sveta Gora.

A third hill slopes down toward the river from the north. It begins at the Garvanov Kamuk Height, and ends in the south with the trapeze-like height named Trapezitsa. In the east, south, and west, Trapezitsa inclines toward the Yantra River in steep slopes, while in the north it is connected with the hill itself by a small saddle. Like Tsarevets, because of its natural defenses, it too was turned into a fortress during the Middle Ages.

In many places the Yantra River has formed small river terraces, on which are located living, industrial, and other premises. Above them, immediately beside the Usteto Pass, are located the Veliko Turnovo railroad station, the "Vasil Kolarov," "Vasil Levaki," and "Balkan" industrial enterprises, and a certain number of living premises. The sector Frenkkhisar is located southeast of Tsarevets Hill, and in the north is the "Vasil Marrikov" State Industrial Enterprise. The Asenova Makhala sector is located between Tsarevets and Trapezitsa, and to the northwest of Trapezitsa are the Trapezitsa railroad station, the meat center, and the "Deveti Septemvri" Dip (Durahavno industriyalno predpriyatie, State Industrial Enterprise).

The origin of Turnovo is lost in the distant past. As a settlement, the city existed as early as Roman times. Little is known regarding its development until the second half of the twelfth century. The city became widely known only after 1186, when it was chosen by Asen and Peter as capital of the Bulgarian state. From this year until the fall of Bulgaria to Turkish enslavement, the story of Turnovo is closely linked with the history of the whole country. In a short time the city became the most important political, cultural, economic, and spiritual center of the country. King's palaces, churches, and other state establishments quickly appeared on Tsarevets Hill. Still today, dating from the epoch, the foundations of the fortification walls, the southeastern war tower known as the Baldwin Tower, built during the thirteenth century and restored between 1930-1931, the remnants of the thirteenth century feudal castle, the foundations of the patriarchal church, the belfry, also dating from the thirteenth century, and others remain. Trapezitsa was inhabited by the Bulgarian feudal aristocracy -- lords and high clergy. The foundations of 17 family churches and remnants of houses of the lords around them have been discovered here to date. The foundations of the old fortification wall have remained in places.

The largest part of the population of the city then lived in the Asen Fortress. There, in 1186, the Asen brothers and Peter proclaimed Bulgarian independence. In the Asen Fortress numerous historical monuments dating from that epoch are to be seen. The foundations of the "Sveti Dimitur Solunski" church, built there by the Asen dynasty several months before the rebellion was proclaimed, the "Sveti Chetirideset Muchenitsi" church, built in 1230 by Ivan Asen II in honor of his victory at Klokotnitsa, and restored after Bulgarian liberation from the Turkish yoke, the "Sveti Apostol Petur i Pavel" church,

built during the second half of the thirteenth century, the bath of King Shishman, and other objects have been preserved. Prekhisar was inhabited by foreign merchants from Dubrovnik, Venice, and other places. They supplied the aristocracy with fabrics, decorative objects, expensive household utensils, and other exotic produce. At the end of the Second Bulgarian State, the widely known Bulgarian clergymen Teodosiy Turnovski, Grigoriy Tsamblak, and Patriarch Evtimiy lived and worked in Turnovo and in the nearby monasteries.

In 1393 Turnovo was taken by the Turks, plundered, and burned. The palaces, churches, and walls of Tsarevets and Trapezitsa were destroyed to the core. Trapezitsa was soon covered with weeds and bushes, and on the ruins of Tsarevets a whole sector of Turkish houses grew up, many of which were built on the foundations of the old Bulgarian palaces and churches.

During the time of the enslavement under the Turks, the glory of Turnovo waned, but did not die. During the second half of the period of tyranny, the city began to rise as the economic and commercial center of North Bulgaria. Principally the fur, leather, shoe, sewing, and saddler's crafts flourished here. The Turnovo craftsmen's products were sold all over the entire Ottoman Empire. During the sixteenth century, Dubrovnik merchants settled once again in Turnovo. Their arrival contributed greatly to the development of trade. Long caravans began leaving the city, loaded with raw hides, wool, honey, silk, and other agricultural products, going to Dubrovnik, Brashov (now Stalin), Odessa, and even to Vienna and Moscow. Large herds of cattle and livestock produce were sent to Istanbul and Adrianople, and large quantities of grain and raw hides were sent to Svishtov and Varna (now Stalin). Because of this commerce,

a large number of inns and stores were built in Turnovo, some of which have been preserved until the present day. The best known among them is the inn of Khadzhi Nikoli, built by the famous Bulgarian Mason Kolyu Ficheto in 1862. Today the visitor is still struck by the beautiful and, for its period, complicated architecture of the inn. The first industrial enterprises appeared in Turnovo at the end of the Turkish enslavement. A factory for drawing silk was opened in 1861. Soon thereafter a second factory for drawing silk and a beer factory were opened.

On June 24, 1877, the brotherly Russian armies gave Turnovo its liberty. In indescribable joy, the entire Turnovo population turned out to welcome its liberators. The soldiers and officers were heaped with gifts and thanks. As a sign of its deep gratitude, the Turnovo public named the street, along which the Russian armies passed, after the famous Russian general, Gurko.

On the eve of the liberation, 26,000 people were living in Turnovo. The majority were Turks. During the war of liberation, the entire Turkish population left the city along with the retreating Turkish armies. After the war, only a small part of these returned.

After the liberation, Turnovo was chosen as capital of the young Bulgarian state. A constituent assembly which adopted the Turnovo constitution and held the First Grand National Assembly was convened on the premises of the present People's Soviet (the former Turkish policy building), which was built by Kolyu Ficheto. A little later the foundations of the organized socialist movement of Bulgaria were laid in Turnovo. In 1890, the founder of the socialist movement in Bulgaria, Dimitur Blagoev, together with his wife Vela Blagoev, of Turnovo, settled in that city. Soon after this arrival, he organized

On April day in 1891, the first socialist meeting in Bulgaria was held in the vineyard of Nikola Gabrovski, and was attended by some 10 delegates. It made preparation for the first constituent congress of the party (BRSDP -- Bulgarska rabotnicheska sotsiyal-demokraticheska partiya, Bulgarian Workers Social Democratic Party), which, as is known, was held on Buzludsha Peak during July of the same year. The Bulgarian socialist press also originated in Turnovo. The book "Shto e Sotsiyalizm i ima li pochva toy u nas" (What is Socialism, and Does it have Grounds in Our Country?) was printed there in 1891. The following year, the first issue of the newspaper "Rabotnik" (Worker) was printed. The building in which the printing shop was located has been preserved, and made into a museum corner for the newspaper "Rabotnik." In 1894, the Third Party Congress was held in Turnovo, and in 1902, the Ninth Congress.

Economically, Turnovo developed very slowly between liberation and the establishment of the people's regime. Only a few small industrial enterprises appeared in the city, such as textile, leather, and food concerns. The bourgeois governments devoted very little attention to the cultural development and planning of the city. As a result of all this, the population of the city increased but slowly. At the time of the first official census of Bulgaria, carried out in 1880, Turnovo had 11,241 inhabitants, and at the time of the most recent, in 1946, 16,182.

After the establishment of the people's regime, Turnovo began to grow and improve speedily. Some of the existing industrial enterprises merged, others expanded. The number of workers engaged in them increased as well. Now Turnovo has industrial enterprises for the

production of various women's garments, belts, berets, cotton yarns and fabrics, furniture, starch, beer, and for the processing of meat and raw hide. New, beautiful public and private buildings appeared in the city. A new post office, a new library, residential blocks, and other premises were built, the external appearance of which has been influenced by the rich architectural heritage of the old city. The green areas within the city limits were increased, and new public parks and sport grounds were built.

Turnovo is well placed from the point of view of transportation. Through it runs the Transbalkan railroad, which has 2 stations within the city limits: Veliko Turnovo, and Trapezitsa. In order to reach one station from the other by train, one must pass through 2 tunnels dug under the city itself. Six highways issue from the city, linking it with all nearby cities and villages. The most important of these is the highway coming from Ruse, running through Turnovo, and leading to southern Bulgaria through the Pass of the Republic (Khainboas).

Turnovo is an okrug and okoliya center. It is also an important cultural and educational center. The city has a large museum, a well organized library, a national theater, 2 general educational high schools, 2 normal schools, 3 technical schools, a pioneers' palace, etc.

Along with the economic, cultural, and administrative development of the city, its population grew. By the end of 1955, Turnovo had over 20,000 inhabitants.

Apart from the sights of the city, visitors can enjoy also its immediate surroundings. The historical Preobrazhenski Monastery is perched at the foot of perpendicular rocks about 5 km north of the city

in the beautiful Berveneto Pass, and on the right bank of the river, just opposite, is the Sveta Troitsa Monastery. On a high plateau to the northeast of the city, about 3 km away from Turnovo, is Arbanasi village, remarkable for its historical past and architectural design.

Taking into consideration the grandiose historical past of Turnovo, the historical and architectural monuments connected with it, and the city's original location, on December 27, 1955, the Council of Ministers issued a decree whereby part of Turnovo is declared an historical preserve. The decree aims at the conservation and restoration of the ancient part of the city, which, because of its picturesque and artistic architectural form, has been the marvel of visitors.

In the immediate future, the general city plan for Turnovo will be prepared and approved. The city will be supplied with good mountain water. Near the "Velchova Zavera" square a large model hotel will be built, whose 6 or 7 floors with terraces, roofs, arches, and other architectural characteristics, all patterned after the architectural heritage of the city and blending with the panoramic view, will face toward the Yantra River.

After a few years have passed, Turnovo, beautiful as it is, will have become even more beautiful and attractive. Very well planned, and abounding in rich greenery, with its national theater, painting gallery, museums, and other institutions, the city will become even more picturesque. Sveta Gora will again be covered by rich forest vegetation. It will have a spacious park, from which joyful young voices and songs will float toward the city again, and Yantra, with its high waters and beaches, and with thousands of poplars and lilac trees lining the banks, will reflect the unforgettable surroundings beauties in its silvery waters.

**FIGURE CAPTIONS**

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**Turnovo is picturesquely located by the Yantra River**

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**Turnovo -- the railroad tunnel under the city**

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**Sketch of Turnovo city and its surroundings**

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**The Khadshi Nikoli Inn in Turnovo, built in 1853**